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SOME RECENT BOOKS ON ART

I. THREE BOOKS ON SPAIN. *

When a bad book appears, the effectual remedy is a conspiracy of silence. Books live on the lips of men, and when men cease to talk about them, they perish. And so, when a good book is published, it is the duty of him who reads it to pass it on to his friends, or, if he dare not trust them with its possession, at least to pass on the glad tidings of its coming.

Spain is the hardest of all European countries to understand. This is because it is not really European. Not the Straits of Gibraltar, but the Pyrenees divide Europe from Africa. Spain is in truth a detached fragment of the Dark Continent. Her bare, parched mountains, her verdureless, sun-baked plains, the whole aspect of a land that speaks of the desolating power of tropical heat, tell us that we are in Morocco, and that the illimitable Sahara is just beyond. The people, too, are African in their pride, their dignity, their customary indolence broken by fits of fierce energy, their narrowness of view, their religious fanaticism, their indifference to pain, whether in themselves or in others. Indeed, it is most likely that the original Iberians came from Northern Africa, and were of the same race as the Berbers who now roam over the desert sands of Morocco in search of blood and water. If so, it explains much in the Spanish temperament which otherwise is inexplicable.

This alien character of the land and its inhabitants raises a barrier which only much intercourse combined with native sympathy can overleap. One may live for years among the Spaniards, and yet never penetrate into their thoughts nor comprehend their strange outlook on life, so different from our own that it is only with much effort that we can understand it. And even when we have penetrated into their inner consciousness and attained their point of view, it seems so unreasonable, so narrow, so one-sided, that we find it difficult of toleration. Mr.

* THE SOUL of SPAIN, by Havelock Ellis (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.)
CITIES of SPAIN, by Edward Hutton (The Macmillan Co.)
THE ART of THE PRADO, by Charles S. Ricketts (L. C. Page & Co.)

Ellis, however, is not like the rest of us who go through Spain with open eyes and closed hearts. He has studied the people until he understands them, and while their ideals are not his, they are not beyond the pale of his sympathy.

His book is well named. He has penetrated the Spanish soul, and he reveals it to us in its weakness and its strength, plainly, but not unkindly. All who contemplate a trip to that land of romance should read his work, and they who have returned will find it in an explanation of much that they did not comprehend.

His Introduction and his chapters on "The Spanish People" and "The Women of Spain" are particularly informing. They contain the results of his patient study and long observation, and they are the essence of the book. The other chapters on special subjects are interesting, and all are most beautifully written, in that style which every reader of his books has learned to love; but while they may be neglected, if need be, the portions that I have named are really necessary to a comprehension of the Spanish people. In them the essence of the Spanish spirit is revealed, the Spaniard's soul laid bare. It is a strange soul, narrow and intense, which, like the soul of the middle ages, yearns passionately for sweetness and light, and yet continually misses the true way and strays into paths of darkness.

No one can wander through Spain without looking much at Spanish women. It is doubtful whether St. Anthony himself would have been able continually to avert his gaze. Their wonderful eyes, exceeding in size and lustre those of all other lands, their faces and figures that are so often perfect in beauty and grace, their rich complexions, the statuesque calm of lineaments that seem to be carved from purest ivory, and their singularly steadfast regard that turns not away because a stranger stares, all compel attention from the most indifferent. But what is occurring behind that brow so immobile as compared with the faces of her northern sisters is something which the visitor from a foreign land cannot even imagine. Mr. Ellis, however, came to our assistance, and does much to let us into her point of view; and it must be said that the revelation is usually to her credit.

Of the other chapters, those on Montserrat and "Spanish

Ideals of To-day" I found to be of greatest interest. Not that Mr. Ellis does justice to Montserrat. Neither pen nor pencil can do that. Of all mountains that I have seen it is the most fascinating, incredible in its beauty and in the fantastic shapes of its towers and battlements and far-reaching horns of white stone that seek to penerate the sky. There it stands, white in a land where all else is brown, fertile in a land where all else is desolation, the richest vegetation issuing from the smallest crevices of the rock; so extraordinary in its shapes that Doré in his maddest visions saw nothing like it. No wonder that it was always a sacred mountain; no wonder that it was chosen as the dwelling place of the Holy Grail. There are few experiences in life so completely satisfying as a sojourn at the great monastery hidden in a cleft of the rock beneath its towering summits, and few are they who can leave it without a longing to return and end their days in its peaceful shade.

Of all men, the monks have been the wisest in the selection of their dwelling places. Nearly all monasteries are in situations commanding a glorious view. Is it because they realize the uplifting effects upon the soul of an extended prospect, bearing it off on the wings of the morning to the very throne of God? Or is it that, denying themselves the joys that come from woman's beauty, they seek to indemnify themselves by revelling in the beauty of nature? Whichever it be, the monks who located the monastery at Montserrat were masters of their craft.

The chapter on "Spanish Ideals of To-day" takes a hopeful view of Spain's future, and even the most casual tourist sees everywhere since the Spanish-American War signs of a national awakening. That shock forced on Spanish pride a realization of Spain's weakness, and convinced her of the necessity of joining the march of civilization, while it freed her from the colonies that were a millstone around her neck, dragging her down to perdition, as they would drag us down were it not for our greater strength.

Mr. Ellis intimates, though he does not plainly say it, what a somewhat extensive reading of Spanish has forced me to believe, that Spain's failure is largely due to the fact that they are not an intellectual nation. This may be due to the Inquisition. A

people who for hundreds of years are not allowed to think must lose in a large measure the power of thought. On the other hand, it may well be urged that if they had been a nation of thinkers they would never have suffered the Inquisition to gain its monstrous ascendancy. Most likely they were born narrow-minded. Certainly their literature, outside of Cervantes, is painfully deficient in thought; so much so that I often feel that the time that I have spent upon it has been largely wasted. It contains much that is beautiful; but rarely does it grapple with the deeper problems of life, and when it does, it is usually in an ineffectual way. If this suspicion is correct — if the real trouble with Spain is an inherent want of intellectual breadth — then her case is essentially hopeless, and she must always limp behind the other civilized countries.

Mr. Hutton is not a specialist on Spain, like Mr. Ellis. His heart and his soul are in Italy. He goes through Spain as a tourist, like the rest of us; but he sees it with a poet's eye and describes it with a poet's pen. To me his book is the most beautiful piece of English prose that has been written since Walter Pater. And the style recalls that of Pater. It has the same linked sweetness, which reminds one of some exquisite legato playing upon a perfect instrument. One can read Mr. Hutton's book again and again for the mere sensuous beauty of the words, as one reads poetry.

Yet it is full of meaning and keen-eyed observation, just as were Pater's essays. Mr. Hutton is never a slave to his words, writing for the mere joy of their honeyed cadences. He sees things as they are, with remarkable clearness of vision, and he tells us what he sees. Though he writes so exquisitely about Spain, you can see that he is no great admirer of the land or its art. He perceives that it is mostly a barren land with few spots that are truly delightful, and that its art is mostly imitative, and too often spoiled in the translation; that there is something barbaric in the overloaded ornamentation of its great cathedrals. But while he does not try to lead us into a fool's paradise of injudicious admiration, while his taste, cultivated by long acquaintance with the masterpieces of Italy, is severe, he tells us

everything so charmingly that his book is truly a joy to the soul.

I should love to quote many pages to show the felicity of his style; but let this tribute to Paris on page 92 suffice:

“You will not find in Madrid anything of the sad ascetic dignity or the bravura of Spain. And if you compare her with Paris, how infinitely must she fall short of that beautiful city of spaces, where is the sweetness of a river, where the sun is lovely in its temperance, and the playing of the light upon the water is like the music of the flute, and the bridges bear you over almost like a sigh, though one of them has flung itself across the gulf with the joy of a perfect thought. And does she not hold herself back, as it were, from the river, so that a certain breadth and largeness, wanting in the Seine itself, may be added to it, by means of a due sense of proportion, of form? There the lucid streets that run like streams beneath the trees, lead ever towards some vistaed loveliness, and the buildings are like thoughtful prayers, perfectly expressive, or like the immense laughter of youth, or like the gorgeous unfulfilled boasts of a young man.

“Ah! Paris, city of light, the capital of the modern world, what Athens was, what Rome was, you are to the world to-day, the centre of our civilisation, where the arts are considered of a due importance, and you yourself are a beloved being to be adorned and cared for by your citizens. How should we imitate you in our solid heaviness, our sordid poverty, our blatant wealth; we who have gathered ourselves together into an immense crowd, and dubbed our frightful heaps of bricks and mortar, a city; our crowd of thoughtless inarticulate breadwinners, citizens. How different is life in your streets, from that of London or any other city! I have watched Spring pass up the streets, gay with the so various life of the City of Light. It is enough, I have seen the last wonder of the world. For there abide these three, Rome, London and Paris — the first is Prospero, who has known many tragedies; the second is Caliban, beastly and inarticulate; the last is Miranda, my dear darling, from whose lips has fallen the word — humanity. And if Rome who gave her life, and London who is envious in her mire, bow down to her,

who is the City of Light; how should Madrid look but ridiculous when she compares herself with her."

Yet there is another passage on page 71 that I must quote, for it contains a much needed rebuke to a class of American tourists of whom, alas! we find too many:

"I came to the inn at last, to find it full of tourists, Americans, who under the guidance of one of their number had been 'doing' the city, as they informed me. They seemed to think I should be glad of their company. At dinner, which is an early meal in Avila, they told each other their adventures. But he who was the leader and guide began to speak of Santo Tomás in a loud voice, so that we all might benefit by his knowledge. I did not hear the beginning of his discourse, for I was talking with an old Spaniard who sat beside me; but my attention was caught when I heard him say, . . . 'so I spat right there on the tomb, and the monk didn't dare say anything, but he just looked; I can't tell you easily how he looked.'

"My Spanish friend moved in his seat and asked me, 'It is of the tomb of Torquemada that he speaks?' I did not know, but at his request I asked.

" 'Yes, sir, 'Im telling you, aren't I? I spat right there on the tomb. I'm a free-born American, a liberty-loving, educated Independant minister, and I'm glad to have the chance to show these Spanish idolaters what I think of their man-burning devils.' 'And so say all of us,' said a young man across the table, with a laugh, while the others smiled and seemed to enter into the spirit of the thing.

"A small part of this I told my neighbor; but, alas, he had understood.

" 'But it is too long ago, surely it is too long ago — to bear malice,' he said, in a quiet but agitated voice. 'We are Christians, it is very necessary to forgive, is it not so?' . . .

"But that strident voice that was used to domineer over many congregations would not have it so.

" 'And yet,' said my friend to me in the hubbub that followed, 'and yet it was us he burned; if we have forgiven, why should he remember?' . . .

"It was night when I returned to Santo Tomás, but the

Father was waiting for me in the sacristy. After a minute he said, 'My son, you are troubled, you are angry, what has happened? It is not well to sleep when one is angry.' And somehow I told him all. Once or twice he smiled, but there were tears in his eyes as he led me, in the midst of that great room, to the bare slab of slate beneath which Torquemada sleeps. 'It is true,' he said, 'we have forgiven him.' There was a long silence, and then with a great deference he turned towards me and said, 'If you will, señor, we will pray for him and for us all, because—is it not so?—where one who is in trouble is left unaided, there passes an executioner; and where two or three are gathered together in unkindness, there is the Inquisition.' As we knelt I saw him wipe away the mark of scorn from the grave with the sleeve of his cloak."

Mr. Ricketts' book on the Prado is an admirable guide to that fine gallery. It has often been called a gallery of masterpieces, and as it is rather off the beaten track, those who visit it are apt to overrate its importance, placing it above the Louvre and the galleries of Florence, with neither of which can it compare. Still, it is one of the world's greatest collections, and now that Velasquez is in such high favor and the art dealers are working up such a craze for the pictures of El Greco, it is of especial interest.

Mr. Ricketts is a painter, and so has a technical knowledge which is of great value. But unlike most painters he has a catholic knowledge of art in its larger aspects and the literary skill to make plain his views. He knows his subject, and can tell what he knows. He reviews in detail the contents of the gallery, and his judgments usually leave little to be desired.

The central figure in the Prado is of course Velasquez, and Mr. Ricketts' consideration of his work is the most judicious that has fallen under my observation. He admires his truth, his perfect sincerity his detachment of view, his marvellous technique, as much as anyone can; but he also perceives his limitations, which many others do not. He sees that while Velasquez is the greatest of all realists, his absolute incapacity to grasp the ideal condemns him forever to a second rank. If

one wishes to be assured of this, it is not necessary to leave the Prado to find the proof. One has only to turn from the masterly portraits of Velasquez to Titian's portrait of Charles V at the Battle of Mühlberg to see what a gulf there lies between genius and talent, even when at its highest, as in Velasquez. Titian has not idealized Charles. It is a perfect likeness. We see before us a small man on horseback alone on the borders of a wood. We see the plain features and the projecting under-jaw, just as they were in life. But the genius of the supreme master has given to this paltry figure all the majesty of imperial power. If no one told us that it was an emperor who rides there in armor with his lance at rest, we should still know his station, and should realize that upon his nod hung the fortunes of a world. Velasquez, least imaginative of men, cannot paint like that.

Like most critics, Mr. Ricketts admires the broad brush work of Titian, Velasquez and Rembrandt in their later days, and attributes it to a growing mastery of their craft. Yet I suspect that this is a delusion, and that these masters painted so, not because they wished to, but because they had to. With the long sight that comes with advancing years they had to stand further from the canvas and paint with a longer brush, producing the sketchy effects imitated by so many modern artists. We may well believe that the masters would, had their eyes permitted, gladly have returned to the detailed perfection of their younger days, rendered more effective by a wider experience and a deeper insight into the eternal verities.

I cannot share Mr. Ricketts' admiration for Titian's "La Gloria," the picture which Charles V took with him into his retirement at Yuste and on which his dying eyes were fixed. It seems to me a poor thing, painted by command and without conviction. But there are in the gallery so many glorious masterpieces by the master that one need not cavil over that; and to them all Mr. Ricketts does full justice.

And he does well in calling attention to the incomparable collection of Rubens' works which to my mind are the Prado's supreme attraction. Nowhere else can one see Rubens in such splendor. The room in which hangs his masterpieces, mostly the product of his full maturity, when the shadows had almost

vanished from his work and when, inspired by the blonde beauty of his second wife, he accomplished prodigies that have never been paralleled in painting, fairly dazzle the eyes. The sight of those rooms would alone repay the fatigues and expense of a journey to a city far more remote than Madrid.

II. THREE BOOKS ON ITALY.*

I have loved Tuscany much, and have wandered through it not a little beneath the summer's sun; but my ideal of happiness would be to start out upon a bright, crisp morning in October with Mr. Hutton's book in hand, following his footsteps day by day, and seeing all the beautiful things of which he speaks. The autumn would merge into winter, the winter turn to spring and the glory of the summer give place to December's chill long before the quest was finished, so many are the lovely things in art and nature to which he points the way. He writes with a fullness of knowledge that is truly encyclopædic and with an enthusiasm and a joy in all gracious and beautiful things that is contagious. He has too much to tell, his book is too crammed with information, for him to indulge in the fine writing that characterizes his book on Spain. Always we wish that he would tell us more. But he has so much to point out that he can only say, "Look," and then pass on.

Much as he loves the art of Tuscany, he loves still more the Tuscan landscape — sweetest of all landscapes save those of Umbria. I cannot refrain from quoting this brief description on page 368, of the view from the summit of Mount Falterona, which will give a taste of his quality:

"It was there I waited the dawn. For long in the soft darkness and silence I had watched the mountains sleeping under the few summer stars. Suddenly the earth seemed to stir in her sleep, in every valley the dew was falling, in all the forests there was a rumour, and among the rocks where I lay I caught a

* FLORENCE and NORTHERN TUSCANY, WITH GENOA, by Edward Hutton (the Macmillan Company).

THE CITIES OF ITALY, by Arthur Symons (E. P. Dutton & Company).

ITALICA, by William Roscoe Thayer (Houghton, Mifflin & Company).

flutter of wings. The east grew rosy; out of the mysterious sea rose a golden ghost hidden in glory, till suddenly across the world a sunbeam fell. It touched the mountains one by one; higher and higher crept the tremulous joy of light, confident and ever more confident, opening like a flower, filling the world with gladness and light. It was the dawn: out of the east once more had crept the beauty of the world.

“Then in that clear and joyful hour God spread out all the breadth of Italy before me: the plains, the valleys, and the mountains. Far and far away, shining in the sun, Ravenna lay, and lean Rimini and bartered Pesaro. There, the mountains rose over Siena, in that valley Gubbio slept, on that hill stood S. Marino, and there, like a golden angel bearing the Annunciation of Day, S. Leo folded her wings on her mountain. Southward, Arezzo smiled like a flower, Monte Amiata was already glorious; northward lay a sea of mountains, named and nameless, restless with light, about to break in the sun. While to the west Florence lay sleeping yet, in the cusp of her hills, her towers, her domes, perfect and fresh in the purity of dawn that had renewed her beauty.”

He is a man of the Quattrocento. Modern Italy and all its works, save its ordered liberty, he holds in abhorrence. His soul dwells in the days of Botticelli and Donatello, of Mino da Fiesole and Desiderio da Settignano, of Masaccio and Filippo Lippi. Titian seems to be the last Italian whom he deems worthy of reverence. Is he truly a devout Catholic, or does he only delight in the æsthetic beauty of the faith? However it may be, he has a rare insight into the soul of man at the time of the early Renaissance and a joy in its artistic utterance that is rarely surpassed in its intensity. His outlook is much the same as Ruskin's, but he is guided by knowledge such as Ruskin did not possess, and which was indeed impossible of attainment in Ruskin's day, and by a sound judgment that prevents his delighting in many trifling works over which his great predecessor used to go into ecstasy. He is familiar with the latest discoveries and abreast with the most recent criticism; so that he is not merely a delightful but a safe guide. And for one thing I love him — his thorough detestation of that hateful fanatic Savona-

rola, who burned so many precious masterpieces of art on his bonfire of vanities and lorded it over Florence with so little profit to the city.

It is a delight to common mortals to find that Homer nods; so we may note than on page 319 he attributes the "Virgin Appearing to St. Bernard" in the Badia at Florence to Ghirlandaio. Not that he means it. He has been speaking of Filippo Lippi, and he has not noted that the name of Ghirlandaio has intervened. And so on page 326 he tells us that the "Madonna of the Goldfinch" was painted in 1548, nearly thirty years after Raphael's death, and on page 405 he substitutes Cræsus for Crassus. But such slips correct themselves, and do not impair the value of a work so rich in precious information.

It has been discovered that a mob has a soul of its own, different from the souls of all the men who compose it, and that it will do things of which every member, taken individually, would be incapable. So every city has a soul, different from the souls of all its inhabitants, yet the joint product of them all and of all the men and women who have dwelt within its precincts in the ages past; a soul which is ever present and which seeks to mould in its own image not merely those who are born and dwell therein, but the stranger who is within its gates. Owing to the breaking up of the Italian peninsular into a multitude of petty states usually at variance with one another, the souls of Italian cities are strangely variant and individual. It has been the task of Mr. Symons, foremost of English poets now that Mr. Swinburne is past his prime, to reveal to us the souls of some of the principal cities; and this he has done with a marvellous insight that is the gift of poets and in that exquisite style possessed by them when they turn to prose. He has not the detailed information of Mr. Hutton; he is not a specialist in things Italian; but he has that perception of the essence of things that in primitive times led men to confound the bard with the seer. Rome and Florence, Naples and Venice, Ravenna, Pisa, Siena, Verona, Bologna, Bergamo and Brescia are shown to us, and however well we knew them before, we know them better still when we have read what Mr. Symons has to say. He may add nothing to our knowledge of details, but he will surely

add to our comprehension; and when we have read his pages we shall see the familiar things in a profounder way.

Italy is a land of such infinite variety, so many ages have left their impress upon her, that one may regard her from numberless points of view. Mr. Hutton looks at her as a Catholic, though I suspect that his Catholicism is æsthetic rather than practical. For him the one glorious period is the Quattrocento—when art had attained a development that gave perfect expression to a faith which was still sincere. Mr. Symons' view of Italy is many-sided. He sees not merely the Christian exterior but the profound and ever-enduring paganism that underlies the veneer of Italian Christianity. He realizes that Italy has always been pagan at heart, with the healthy, blithe outlook on life that makes all men who love the wholesome and the beautiful turn back with yearning to the gods of Greece, and he perceives that Italy's ages of darkness have been due to foreign domination, particularly to the rule of Spain and Austria. Not that Mr. Symons ingores the Christian spirit as manifested in Italy; but his sympathy is not sincerely with it. He is a humanist, not a saint. The Italy that Mr. Hutton sees is the Italy of a single epoch, though an epoch so splendid that we can never study it enough. The Italy that Mr. Symons sees with the clearness of a poet's vision is the Italy of all time, the Italy that has worshipped a hundred gods, that has known endless mutations of fortune, that has taken on a thousand shapes, and yet has remained the eternal enchantress. His book is one that should be read more than once.

It was inevitable that anything written on Italy by Mr. Thayer, author of the most vigorous of all short histories of Venice, should be interesting; and "*Italica*" is no disappointment. But it is widely different from the books we have mentioned. Mr. Hutton loves the Italy of the fifteenth century; Mr. Symons the Italy of all time; but it is the living, progressive Italy of to-day, forging steadily ahead among the nations in spite of many impediments, that appeals to Mr. Thayer. His volume of essays deals with subjects as remote from one another in time as Dante and the Italy of 1907; but the spirit is ever

the same, the true American spirit, which delights above all things in the growth of civil and religious liberty, in the uplifting of the whole body of the people, in the development of the country's material resources, in the progress of education and the sciences. To some he will seem an intense anti-clerical, while others will see in him a true friend of religion, who would free it alike from mediæval bigotry and ecclesiastical politics; a man who loves United Italy so much that a Church which makes war upon it is hateful in his sight, but who would lend a cordial support to that Church if it would recognize that the temporal power of the Papacy is gone forever, and co-operate with the government of Victor Emanuel III for the good of Italy and of the world. He loves not the Vatican under the present reactionary influences; but he loves modern Italy with all his heart, and he understands her as only those who sympathize can understand. He sees on every hand grounds for hope and congratulation, and he foresees for her a future not unworthy of her glorious past.

There are too many who decry modern Italy. Some of these are intensely artistic souls, like Ruskin and Mr. Hutton, to whom all modern civilization, with its factories, its railroads, its smoke and noise, are detestable. Others blame Italy because in a few years of disturbed freedom, overwhelmed by debt and with a population long crushed by tyranny, she has not been able to catch up with the nations that lead the van of progress. Still others can see no good in a people or a government that has taken Rome from the Pope. Yet the Italians, particularly in the North, are a fine race who are advancing steadily and even rapidly despite great difficulties, and Mr. Thayer's vigorous and sympathetic presentation of their cause is heartily to be commended.

The style of his book is clear and strong, characterized by the same directness that makes his "History of Venice" so notable. I cannot refrain from quoting one passage from page 31 to show how widely his style and his views differ from those of Mr. Hutton:

"In our grandfathers' day few Yankee seacaptains returned home without bringing back some curiosity—a Buddhist idol, a South-Sea Islander's weapons, a rare piece of Chinese porcelain

or silk — to remind them of their voyages. So, from the ninth to the thirteenth century, every thrifty Venetian who traded to the Levant tucked away in his cargo the leg or arm, or at least a knuckle, of some saint, with which he enriched his parish church and assured himself and his family a safe passage to heaven. Computing by the sum of such relics as remain, the whole number which passed from the East into Western Europe must have been enormous. In the earlier times it was possible to secure at reasonable rates the entire body of a first-class saint. But with the Crusades the stream of purchasers increased a thousand-fold, and the canny Greek, who did a thriving business in these commodities, might get as high a price for a few hairs or the thumb-nail of a third-century martyr as his grandfather got for an entire apostle. The bodies of the favorite and most potent saints having long before been disposed of, dealers filled further orders more parsimoniously, doling out fragments and small bones, unconcernedly duplicating and multiplying until, if all their wares would be united, we should find that John the Baptist had more arms than Briareus and Mary Magdalene more feet than a centipede."

GEORGE B. ROSE.

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